

## MISSION AND VISION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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### **Abstract**

Vocational Education is that aspect of education that provides an individual with knowledge, skills and attitudes required to enter into the world of work and progress in a given occupation. It involves the acquisition of skills and competencies that can help an individual to function productively in industries and commercial occupations. This paper seeks to examine the meaning, objectives, and scope of vocational education in a developing nation. Its vital roles and the major constraints against its optimal contributions are highlighted and recommendations are proffered.

### **Introduction**

Vocational education has been in existence in Nigeria right from the pre-colonial era when early men moved from place to place gathering fruits and rearing domesticated animals to secure their means of living. Then, they took up vocations like black smithing, farming and hunting. Fafunwa (1982) asserts that the blacksmith then manufactured his own tools like cutlasses for farming and arrows for hunting. These are passed from father to children through apprenticeship (Fafunwa, 1974).

During the colonial era, vocational technical education was de-emphasized and literary education gained prominence. Organized vocational and Technical education in Nigeria could be traced to the establishment of courses in various government departments: Nigerian Railway, marine and public work between 1908 and 1935 and the development of formal vocational technical education is linked with the introduction of Western education by the white missionaries at Hope Waddell Institute, Calabar in 1895 and the establishment of Blaize Memorial Industrial School, Abeokuta founded co-jointly by Nigeria and West Indies (Fafunwa, 1974). In Nigeria, the white paper on National Policy on Education NPE (FME, 1981) uses the term technical to embrace vocational education and defines it as "that aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as Basic scientific knowledge". For the purpose of this discussion, the terms vocational and technical education will be used interchangeably because they are considered to be sine qua non.

### **Concept of Vocational Education**

Okoro (1993) defines vocational education as "any form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare persons for employment in recognized occupations". In the same vein, Osuala (1987) observes that vocational education is:

Education designed to prepare individuals for gainful employment as semi-skilled workers or technician or sub professionals in recognized occupations or to prepare individuals for enrolment in advanced technical education programme.

Okorie and Ezezi (1988) opine that vocational education is designed to prepare skilled workers for industries, agriculture, commerce, etc., which is usually provided at the upper secondary level. The philosophical concept of vocational education, according to Okorie (2001), maintains that

The occupational choice of an individual should be based on orientation (interest, ability and aptitude) of the individual; each individual should have the opportunities for employment in the occupation and that resources for education must be provided to develop all human resources needed in national economic development. "Nigeria as a developing nation requires young men and women as sole proprietors in small and medium scale industries that are emerging here and there in the country. The type of Education that possesses such inherent ability to equip them with the required skills is vocational Education; with well acquisition of skills and competencies that can help individuals to function productively in

industries, commercial occupation and even self-reliance and self-employment.

### **Nature and Scope of Vocational Education**

The scope of Vocational Education is multi-faceted ranging from occupation requiring a high degree of skill and scientific knowledge. Jobs requiring minimum training are not generally included in formal programme because the necessary skills can be readily learned on the job.

Ezeagwu and Eze (1999) assert that in any country where Vocational Technical Education (VTE) is adequately funded, properly organised and managed, its citizens enjoy very bright career prospects because of the numerous and varied employment opportunities that are created. The scope of coverage of Vocational Technical Education is examined here- in terms of occupational areas classified into seven major divisions namely: Vocational Agriculture, Distributive Education, Home Economics Education, Health occupation Education, Trade and Industrial Education, Business and Office Education and Technical Education (Osuala, 1995).

The process of formal education consist of education in primary and secondary schools, teacher training colleges, technical colleges, agricultural institutions and universities. The process of non-formal education, some times referred to as out of school education include all forms of training and institutions outside of the formal educational institutions ranging, from individual apprenticeship, scheme training programmes undertaken by NDE, PEP, FEAP, to adult literacy programmes.

Wenrich & Wenrich (1979) in Umuna (2003) remark that Vocational Technical Education is concerned with the whole hierarchy of occupations including the whole spectrum of labour force from semi skilled worker to high-level technical profession.

### **Aim of Vocational Technical Education**

The National Policy on Education (FME 1981) stresses Vocational Technical Education especially in providing trained manpower in applied science, technology, commerce and other vocational disciplines. It is also aimed at providing technical know-how and vocational skills necessary for Agricultural, industrial, commercial, home management, as well as economic development. If the aim is taken properly, there should have been increase in food production, increase in middle level technicians as well as increase in home management and nutrition. The 6-3-3-4 system of education stresses acquisition of right vocational skills to fill the middle level manpower needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigeria.

The objectives and purposes of Vocational Technical Education as enumerated by National Board for Technical Education (NBTE 1987) amongst others include:

Provision of trained manpower in Engineering.

Technology, commerce at professional level.

Provision of qualified and well-equipped personnel to apply scientific knowledge to improve and solve the environmental problems for use and convenience of man.

To introduce professional studies in engineering and other technologies.

To provide technical knowledge and Vocational skills necessary for Agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development

To provide training and impart necessary skills leading to the production of crafts men, technicians, technologists, engineers and other skilled personnel who would be self-reliant and enterprising.

### **The Role of Vocational Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Nigeria**

The world is at the threshold of technical information explosion and micro electronic revolution which has created a new way of living and working which in turn makes new demands on the educational system (Oranu, 1998). Viazey (3974) remarks that the rate at which new ideas and new techniques of production can be embodied in physical capital determines the rate at which the economy as a whole can advance. Vocational skills taught in schools and colleges provide abundant manpower for industries and provide impetus for a technological take off, trade expansion, foreign exchange generation and above all, acts as fulcrum upon which a nation's economy **rotates**.

The proliferation of vocational technical schools or colleges in Nigeria since 1970s shows that Vocational Technical Education is gathering momentum for rapid new ideas and skills for the labour force for optimal production of goods and services. Within the last ten years (1995 to date) the Nigerian Educational Research Council (NERC) gave out fabricated vital teaching -aids to higher institutions which pass technical know-how. Thus, the Bendel University, Abraka Campus, manufactures beakers, tripod stands, graduated cylinders and others. The Physics Department of the University of Ibadan makes laboratory tables for the department. The science resource centre at Ilorin is able to manufacture cylinder, beakers of various grades. Other locally made teaching materials include evaporating dish, rain gauges, scales, pans, spatula and filters, funnels. Most of our schools and colleges produce locally made sport equipment namely javelin, short put, discus, high jump pole vault from sticks and wood to supplement for imported ones which are unaffordable in most cases. The display of some of these items during the Kaduna Trade Fair in February 1997 organised by the Nigerian polytechnics and National Festival of Instructional Materials bear testimony to the fact that most of the sports and .science equipment can be produced locally. What self-reliance means to education is not only to make education a preparation for development but rather a process of development itself. This would make vocational skill acquisition relevant to the individual to cope with a developing and changing state that will enable the country to get out of economic depression.

#### Constraints

Despite the laudable objectives and role played by Vocational Technical Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, its programme is faced with serious set backs such as: inadequate funding defect and lack of qualified personnel, lack of industrial base and lack of infrastructure.

In terms of funding, the administration of general education either underestimate the requirements of vocational education or divert funds meant for it into other areas more appealing to them.

There is scarcity of qualified manpower (teachers) owing to poor pay package (remuneration and low status).

There is insufficient industrial base for the trainees and graduates of Vocational Education. Students on Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) are neither easily placed, nor graduates easily absorbed in industries due to this fact.

#### Recommendations

Based on the forgoing set backs, the following measures if properly implemented will minimize the future occurrence of the challenges to Vocational and Technical Education.

Funding of Vocational Technical Education should be a matter of necessity and funds should be made available for the programme and should only be used for the purpose they are meant to serve. . - Staff training development and continuity should be a matter of priority and emphasis should

be laid on improvement of conditions of service.

- The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) should jointly broaden the curriculum of vocational and technical education in accordance with the needs of Nigerians in their various localities

#### Conclusion

Mission and vision of vocational education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigeria as the topic implies shows that the vocational education in Nigeria has a lot of potentialities to cope with the demands of Nigerian economic development. Government should provide conducive atmosphere and relaxed I environment and also apprenticeship should be pursued and encouraged. Federal and State Governments, groups and individuals should invest in the provision and promotion of vocational and ] technical education in order to produce highly qualified manpower. This is achieved through t establishment of Vocational Technical Education with the provision of financial and instructional facilities to support this institution. The elimination of the problems as **suggested** would place vocational technical education in its proper perspective in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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